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090843Z Nov 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 003842

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2014

TAGS: EFIN EAID PREL IZ KU

SUBJECT: GOK TO TAKE "LEADERSHIP ROLE" ON IRAQI DEBT REDUCTION; AND AGREES ON SOME USG CHANGES TO CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE

REF: A. SECSTATE 238110

1B. SECSTATE 237994

Classified By: Ambassador LeBaron for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Ambassador delivered 8 November reftel points to Minister of Foreign Affairs Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah, following up on Deputy Secretary Armitage's 7 November raising of Iraqi debt and the Sharm el-Sheikh conference with Prime Minister Sabah. Dr. Mohammed said the GOK would take a "leadership role" and be "proactive" towards writing down Iraqi debt, and agreed that a public statement from the GOK would be appropriate and forthcoming. He also agreed with some of the USG-recommended changes to the Egyptian Sharm el-Sheikh communique, including the removal of a reference to ending "all forms of violence" and replacing it with a condemnation of "all acts of terrorism." End Summary.

GOK To Take "Leadership Role" in Reducing Iraqi Debt

12. (C) Ambassador delivered 8 November reftel points to Minister of Foreign Affairs Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, following up on Deputy Secretary Armitage's 7 November raising of Iraqi debt and the Sharm el-Sheikh conference with Prime Minister Sabah (septel.) The Ambassador said it was USG understanding that the GOK would follow the Paris Club lead and provide comparable treatment on Iraqi debt, and Dr. Mohammed concurred. "We will take a leadership role in this," he said, "and we will be proactive, we will demand a write-down of Iraqi debt." Dr. Mohammed also said that the GOK had expressed its position on debt to Iraqi President al-Yawar and that standing orders had been given to the GOK Minister of Finance and other officials to follow this position in all meetings involving the World Bank and other international financial bodies. The Ambassador urged Dr. Mohammed to have the GOK make a public statement confirming its position. (Note: We assess that such a statement will not come before the Sharm meeting.)

GOK Agrees with USG Changes to Sharm el-Sheikh Communique

13. (C) The Ambassador shared USG concerns about the Egyptian Sharm el-Sheikh communique with Dr. Mohammed, and Dr. Mohammed said that the GOK had already communicated its concerns with the Egyptian government. The Ambassador said the USG preferred to ask for a reduction of "the vast majority" of Iraqi sovereign debt and not just a "substantial" amount, and Dr. Mohammed referred vaguely to language used when former Secretary Baker visited Kuwait. The Ambassador also raised the USG-suggested change in the communique from condemning "all forms of violence and terrorism" to condemning "all acts of terrorism in Iraq," and Dr. Mohammed wholeheartedly agreed on this point. Simply referring to violence, Dr. Mohammed said, would "make the terrorists and the military the same, and that is not correct." He said the GOK had independently made this point to the Egyptians.

FM on Falluja: "Don't Let Enemy Define Your Role."

14. (SBU) Dr. Mohammed said that he appreciated the Deputy Secretary's 7 November visit and reviewed the main points of

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DepSec Armitage's discussion with the Prime Minister with the Ambassador. On Falluja and other Iraq troublespots, Dr. Mohammed said "public diplomacy efforts must be redoubled, don't let your enemies define your role in Iraq." He added that the USG "must explain why any military action is for the benefit of the Iraqis," and he hoped that the USG image would not be tarnished in the current Falluja campaign. He agreed, however,